

There are lessons to be learned from all of the individuals in Judges. The lives of some are chronicled in detail, while others are only mentioned in a verse or two (e.g. 3:31, 12:8-15). God’s Word doesn’t usually say “\_\_\_\_\_ was a courageous person.” Instead it is likely to *show* the person’s character by his/her actions. Study the “characters” of the key people in Judges and Ruth. Note their strengths, weaknesses, fears, victories and the grace and patience of God as he works through them. Also be alert for evidences of the observation recorded in 17:6 and 21:25: *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”*

Ch. 1 Make a list of what the various tribes did and did not do (or could not do). If you read chapter 1 by itself it seems that the failure of the tribes to fully possess their lands was because of “inability.” But according to 2:1-3 why had they failed? Why did the people make covenants with the people of the land (cf. vv. 32,33,35)? Why did they not tear down the pagan altars? Not that *we* are to kill all the “infidels” around us, but what dangers does this suggest to you for the people of God in other time periods? Today?

2:10-23 and 3:1-6 List what was “so bad” about what the people did and why (cf. Deut. 7:1-8, 16-18). What is here implied that the Lord would have done if the people had been obedient (as stated in Deu 7:20-26)? To what extent can someone keep all God’s law today? How can we please God (cf. Rom 8:1-11)? On the other hand, what must we be careful not to do (Rom 13:14)?

2:15-19 This is a description of what is commonly known as the “Judges Cycle.” While reading Judges, list the various times this “cycle” is repeated through the book. Possible column headings for such a list might include: passage, wrong action/attitude of the people, results, deliverer/judge, length of time of peace. [Note: Sometimes the oppression,

and the deliverance by a judge was limited to one or several tribal groups as opposed to involving the whole nation.]

3:31 Shamgar’s accomplishment was no small feat. God certainly was the one who enabled him to accomplish it successfully. God is not bound to work miracles through the common things of our lives, but He could. Ask yourself and the Lord if there is something you have available “at hand,” which could be used for his purposes.

Chs. 6-8 Study Gideon’s character and what is revealed about him in the narrative. He was full of doubt and questions. How did the Lord respond to these? Do you ever have times when you can identify with Gideon? Gideon was also bold to state his apprehensions to the Lord. Do you talk honestly with the Lord about what’s going on inside of you? At the end, for Gideon, regrettably, he didn’t finish well (cf. 8:22-27). Pray that the Lord will not only direct your steps now, but that he will help you to finish your course well (cf. 2Ti 4:7-8).

Chs. 13-16 There is much to examine in Samson’s life. Consider reading about and meditating on: (1) his parents, (2) his wilfulness, (3) his morals and attitude toward the general command of God, (4) his attitude toward his special calling (cf. Num 6:1-8), (5) his casual, playful and “light” attitude toward important things, (6) his vengeance, (7) his failure to credit God as the source of his strength (16:15-17), (8) his beginning potential and his ultimate end.

Ruth 1-4 During the time of the Judges (1:1) the story of Ruth underscores that there were people, some of them very “unlikely,” who displayed remarkable character qualities. The testimonies of Ruth and Boaz (cf. 2:4), and the other “shining lights” of Judges show us that it is possible to shine bright even when the night is dark. In spite of the darkness God can use YOU too!